

## 1961-62—Robert F. Williams

1961-00a Olson letter to Dear Friends: In the struggle for civil rights

1961-00b The situation in Monroe, N.C. (arrest of Robert F. Williams)

1961-01Jan-a The Monroe 'Kidnapping': "the forces of white supremacy...."

1961-03Mar9 For Immediate Release: Williams speaking in Vancouver BC

1961-03Mar16 For Immediate Release: FPCC support Williams speech at UBC

1961-03Mar20 For Immediate Release: Williams supporting Cuba at UBC

1961-08Aug26a "I am not guilty" – Robert F. Williams; pickets in N.C.

*1961-10Oct* (*See: FPCC News*): *Robert F. Williams is object of RCMP hunt*

1962-02Feb12 Letter to President John F. Kennedy from Canadians in support

1962-99 (*undated*) clipping Cuban news: "El asilo de R.F.Williams"

Found in 1961

# DEAR FRIEND of the struggle for civil rights;

Attached you will find three important items dealing with the alarming incident of racist terror that burst out in the North Carolina city of Monroe on August 26th.

The Canadian press has been silent about the situation in Monroe except for the publication of a release from the RCMP asking Canadians to assist them and the FBI in the arrest of Union County National Association for the Advancement of Coloured Peoples president, Robert F. Williams, whom they speculated was in Canada. This "wanted" notice repeated the slanderous portrayal of Williams as a common criminal.

On Saturday, September 30th CBC carried a newscast to the effect that Williams managed to escape Southern-Style lynch law and get to the safety of Cuba. But the situation confronting his co-fighters for racial equality in Monroe N.C. is indeed perilous.

To aid the Monroe freedom fighters, a Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants has been set up. Conrad Lynn, the attorney for the committee, has appeared before the court that approved indictments against Williams and four others on the kidnap charge, and won the habeas corpus proceeding no instituted.

The judge set bail for R. Crowder, chairman of the Monroe Non-Violent Action Committee at \$ 15,000 and for J.C. Lowery, a freedom rider from New York, and H. Reape an MNUAC member, at \$ 10,000. Two others are already out on bail.

Conrad Lynn is a New York civil rights lawyer who came into considerable prominence four years ago through his winning the celebrated 'Kissing Case' involving some Negro children charged and jailed for kissing a white child.

Head of the American committee is Dr. A.E. Perry of Monroe who just a year ago was framed by racist authorities there and imprisoned. Four years ago Dr. Perry's life was saved when Klansmen in some sixty cars, heavily armed, moved in against his home only to be repulsed by defence guards organized by Williams and his associates. In the US, the Monroe Defence Committees, besides raising funds to conduct the costly legal defence of the harassed freedom fighters, are campaigning to collect food and clothing for the citizens of Monroe who have been deprived of employment and relief. They are also providing public forums to the Monroe community and their cause, and are contemplating initiating a "Go See for Yourself" campaign.

Vernal Olson, who may be known to you for his Canada-wide activities in the interests of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, is initiating a Canadian Committee. Mr Olson took it upon himself to protest to the government against the RCMP becoming party to the FBI manhunt of Williams. In the next period the committee intends, at as many opportunities as present themselves, to provide a public platform for the cause of the Monroe civil rights fighters. Our first act is the circulation of the attached material. We need money to pay the immediate costs. Any surplus over and above direct material costs will be forwarded to the Monroe Committee. Should the response be good to these first committee activities we will take upon ourselves to initiate and co-ordinate further projects.

SEND IN YOUR DONATION - AS BIG AS POSSIBLE BUT NO MATTER HOW SMALL - TO :

Vernal Olson  
21 Ellis Gardens  
Toronto 3

## THE SITUATION IN MONROE, N.C.

A New York Freedom Rider and two Negro residents of Monroe, N.C., are in prison on charges of kidnaping. Indictments of the same charge have been brought against Robert F. Williams, militant Negro leader of that city, who is president of the Union County branch of the NAACP, and against Mae Mallory, a New York supporter of Williams' newsletter, The Crusader, who was visiting him in Monroe. The penalty for kidnaping in North Carolina is life imprisonment. The FBI, on the presumption that Williams and Mallory have left the state, are conducting a nationwide manhunt on federal warrants of fleeing across state lines to escape prosecution.

All indications are that the kidnap charges, as well as lesser charges brought against the Freedom Riders, members of the Monroe Non-Violent Action Comm. as well as unaffiliated colored residents of Monroe, are frame ups.

The events on which all of these charges are based took place during and after a police-encouraged riot on August 27 by two to five thousand whites against an anti-segregation picket line in the court house square.

The rioting marked the culmination of a week of white-supremacist hoodlumism against the pickets. Throughout the week police had repeatedly refused to arrest those who assaulted the pickets. Repeated representations had been made to city, state and federal authorities about the increasingly dangerous situation in Monroe and protection asked. All this was to no avail.

During the Aug. 27 rioting, pickets, MNVAC members and others went into the police station for protection from the mob which remained outside threatening for hours. While there they were placed under arrest after police chief had engaged in a conversation with the man who is generally reputed to be the head of the Klu Klux Klan in Monroe.

New Town, the main Negro neighborhood of Monroe, was in a state of alarm and panic. Some residents who had returned from the downtown district had been beaten and chased by whites who threw stones and shot at them. It was feared that the prisoners would be taken by the mob, or turned over by the police to them, and lynched.

As a result of past incursions by KKK motorcades, shooting indiscriminately, the residents of New Town had armed themselves for self-defense and had on several occasions engaged in self defense. On this night an invasion by a motorcade was expected momentarily. Many Negroes not from that neighborhood and many rural Negroes, because of the rioting downtown and rumors of KKK plans, had crowded into New Town for protection.

The Stegalls, a white couple from a nearby town, have told the press that, seeking to avoid the jam caused by the rioting, they drove into New Town. They were stopped by an excited crowd and taken into Williams' home. There were cries of "Kill them! Kill them!" Williams argued in vain with the crowd to set them free. A woman in the crowd shouted threats to Williams that if he turned them loose, the crowd would kill him and the white couple as well.

Even in interviews with North Carolina newspapers after she and her husband had conferred with Union County police officials, Mrs Stegall admitted that Williams and "chided" the crowd had had nothing to do with the alleged tying of their hands. "They were expecting somebody to come after them, and they were ready. I've never seen so many guns in my life," Mrs. Stegall told the Charlotte Observer in an interview printed Aug. 29. "Williams, he made out like he wanted to let us go. He acted like he wanted to be nice to us. But he said if he let us go the mob outside would kill us. Somebody kept yelling 'Let me kill them. Let me kill them'."

In another story in the same issue of the paper Mrs Stegall is quoted as follows, "He Williams told us he couldn't let us go because the mob outside would just get you, and I can't do a thing".

Shortly before the Stegalls drove on to N. Boyte St., the throng had wanted to hold a white highway patrolman who had driven up to speak to Williams. Williams had successfully dissuaded the excited crowd and the highway patrolman, on his advice, had made a speedy exit. At this point, it is reliably reported, Williams went into his house to phone Police Chief A.A. Mauney. He was engaged in this attempt when the Stegalls were stopped in front of his house. The crowd had already brought them into his front yard when, attracted by the noise, he came out.

It is also reported that after he had failed to persuade the crowd to let the white couple go on their way, he had explained to Mr Stegall the crowd's fears about the fate of those in the police station and the expected invasion by the Klan. Williams then asked Mr Stegall if he would get on the phone and use what influence he had with the city authorities, and hence without influence. But Mrs Stegall interjected that she would call and see what she could do.

Williams is a fugitive and his side of the story has not yet been heard. It is reported Williams spoke with Police Chief Mauney and then put Mr. Stegall on the phone. The story given out by Mauney is that Williams said two white people were hostages and would be killed unless the Freedom Riders and local Negro pickets were released. In Mauney's account it is made out that Williams has holding the couple hostage and threatened to kill them. Knowledge of Williams' character and his behavior during the events of the hectic week indicate that Mauney is twisting a description By Williams of the crowd's mood and demands into threats by Williams to make him liable to a kidnapping charge.

A little more than two hours later, after Williams had succeeded in calming down the crowd, the couple was able to drive off unharmed.

Conflicting accounts are that the Stegalls' car, which had been left in the middle of the street, was moved into a driveway or alley by white youth. Since the only whites who could move freely in New Town at the height of the excitement were the young Freedom Riders, who had been living there for a week, the presumption is that a Freedom Rider may have moved the Stegalls' car. Apparently police have chosen Robert Lowry, a Freedom Rider from New York, to fit this role and have thereby indicted him for complicity in kidnapping.

A policeman was shot in the leg allegedly by a Negro. This apparently took place in the railroad yard where police and white civilians

were seen chasing and shooting at Negro men. A 17 year old Negro boy has been arrested on this charge though residents of Monroe state that he was nowhere near the scene at the time.

Freedom Riders, MNVAC members and Negroes, who had entered the police station for protection or to inquire about relatives who had been beaten and arrested, were held incommunicado for two days. They were convicted in a mass trial of "inciting to riot" on no evidence other than that they had engaged in picketing (which is perfectly legal in North Carolina). Fines and sentences up to two years were meted out to the Freedom Riders and suspended in an obvious move to rid Monroe of their presence.

At least one prisoner was badly beaten in jail. Freedom Rider Richard Griswold was put in a cell with extremely violent, integrationist-hating prisoner. When a fellow Freedom Rider, Ken Shilman, was being conducted to a cell in the same area of the prison he heard screams from the first cell and saw a figure bleeding from the eyes, his nose broken, face covered with blood. He did not recognize him as Griswold until the latter managed to gasp out his name. Shilman demanded and secured the transfer of Griswold from that cell before he was killed. The white prisoner who did the beating later boasted to them that he had been promised beforehand a Freedom rider to beat up. He was told that the fine would be \$15.00 at the most and that somebody else would pay it. He complained that he had also been promised a knife but had not been given it.

Maltreatment of the women prisoners included putting five in a cell with only three cots while unused cots were plainly visible beyond the bars. Moreover, the prisoners were not given any food till midday following the day of their arrest.

Monroe and Union County have long records of racial injustice. It is said to be the site of the southeastern headquarters of the Ku Klux Klan. Huge KKK rallies have taken place in the area.

In 1957 the KKK warned Dr. A.E. Perry, Vice - President of the local NAACP, that it was coming to get him. Perry, along with other professionals in the Negro community, had been prominent in petitioning the city council for the construction of a swimming pool in the Negro section of town. Monroe's only swimming pool, built with federal funds and municipally maintained, is for whites only.

Robert F. Williams, President of the Local NAACP, organized a defense squad to stand guard around Perry's home from dusk to dawn. When a KKK motorcade advanced on Perry's house, it was driven off with gun fire. This preceded by a few months, and probably inspired, the widely publicized driving off of the Klan by the Indians in Robeson County, North Carolina.

Monroe was the scene in 1958 of the notorious "Kissing Case" in which two Negro boys aged eight and nine were thrown into the city jail and then sentenced to the reformatory on a charge that one of them had induced a seven year old white girl to kiss him. Robert F. Williams took the lead in calling this case to public attention and fighting for the boys release.

Williams has unsuccessfully tried to enter his own two children in Monroes lily white schools.

Last winter Williams led a group of young Negroes in lunch counter sit-ins in Monroe. Arrested and convicted, he is still appealing his case.

Earlier this summer, Williams led a picket line at the Municipal swimming pool. City authorities not only refused to intergrate the pool, but even set aside one day a week for its use by colored towns-people. (They claim it would be too expensive since water would have to be changed after each time the Negroes used it. ) This was the first picket line ever seen in Union County. (There are no labor unions in Union County.) The picket line was repeatedly threatened and attacked. Two attempts were made on Williams' life.

Although it is well known that Williams does not beleive in pacifism but rather in self-defense when necessary, he invited the Freedom Riders to Monroe. He was not in any way connected with the Monroe Non-Violent Action Committee which the Freedom Riders formed with local residents. He did not attend its meetings nor participate in its picket lines. During the week of their picketing he refrained from going downtown lest his presence serve as an excuse for violence. He urged people to respect the non-violent action and to co-operate with the pickets by observing their rules and regulations.

None of the Freedom Riders who went to Monroe have one word of criticism of Williams' conduct during the time they were there. They are unanimous in stating that Williams in no way caused the violence but that the responsibility for it rest solely on the Monroe police and city authorities. They also state their belief that the racist elements, which are so powerful in that county will go to any lengths of frame-up or violence against Williams. who is the undisputed leader of that area's militant anti-Jim Crow forces.

(Found in 1961)

THE MONROE 'KIDNAPPING'

The forces of white supremacy are maneuvering for a major victory in Monroe, North Carolina, where a minor race war exploded on the weekend of August 26th and 27th. Newspapers, radio and television are giving wide publicity to the official version of the events issued by Chief of Police A. A. Mauney and Mayor Fred Wilson. The Monroe whites are exploiting this opportunity to rid themselves of all opposition from Afro-Americans, and they are especially anxious to discredit Robert F. Williams, the militant NAACP leader.

The tragedy of the Monroe race war is that it might easily have been avoided. The persons responsible were neither Robert Williams, the Afro-American community, nor the Freedom Riders. The blame must be shared by Chief Mauney, Mayor Wilson, the Monroe City Council, Governor of North Carolina Terry Sanford, his aide, Attorney General Robert Kennedy and his brother, President John F. Kennedy. All had prior knowledge of the explosive tensions that were building up in Monroe, all were warned countless times that violence was probable, but all chose to ignore the warnings of Williams and others. It is this writer's opinion that these officials were waiting for an eruption of violence so that state troopers could be brought in, not to defend the Freedom movement, but to crush it. In this they have almost succeeded in Union County.

Major responsibility also rests with the editors of America's various news media which pride themselves on their "freedom" and their "objectivity". From June 18th when Robert and Mable Williams and a group of Monroe youths began to picket the Municipal swimming pool until August 25th, Monroe was clearly news that was fit to print. Almost daily there was violence between the races that was brought to the attention of the police and the press. Yet, with one or two notable exceptions, no newspaper, radio or television station reported the occurrences, much less tried to interpret them. Those of us who were "with" the story were soon convinced that there was a news blackout around Monroe because of wide-spread editorial antipathy to Williams, his advocating that black men should defend themselves against racist violence with violence, and his sympathy with the Cuban revolution.

It is foolish for anyone to question why Williams fled North Carolina. Any one remotely familiar with the ways of southern justice knows that Williams or any other militant black man stands absolutely no chance of receiving a fair hearing in a court with a white judge, a white jury and testifying white policemen. It is thought that Williams has fled to the north. If this is true he is only following a tradition set by countless thousands of other black men throughout American history.

Nevertheless, it is important that the events of August 26th and 27th be set down for the record. All of the events I am about to describe I witnessed personally or heard described almost immediately after they occurred. Most of the newspaper reports have been based solely on the prejudiced tales of Chief of Police Mauney and Mayor Fred Wilson who have about as much interest in the truth as they had in protecting the rights of Monroe's black population, which is to say none at all.

For example, the 'kidnapping' as described in the newspapers never took place. The Russian weapons that were reported to have been found in the Crowder house--the ones that were described so meaningfully in the newspapers--can be bought by any reporter who will take the trouble to go to a gun shop or even a large hardware store in North Carolina or New York. And why have no whites been arrested for inciting riot? I saw them waving rifles and passing around boxes of ammunition in the area of the courthouse in full view of the police on Saturday, August 26th. Why haven't the police arrested the white men who shot Edward Bromberg with a high powered rifle on August 24th? Why

haven't the police arrested Bynum Griffin who tried to kill Williams on June 23rd while highway patrolman watched and laughed? Why haven't they arrested Carol Presley who also tried to kill him with a car on June 24th? The truth is that Monroe justice is white man's justice, a fact that is plain enough, even for the President and his brother, but a fact they seem determined to ignore.

—

All during the week preceding August 26th there had been scattered violence on and near the picket line that the Freedom Riders and local Afro-American youths had set up around the court house and the dental office of Mayor Fred Wilson. The police had barely kept up the show of equal protection, arresting the Freedom Riders and local colored youths for the slightest --or imaginary--infraction of the law. On Saturday several thousand whites, many of them identifiable Klansmen from South Carolina, milled about the town. One car I saw carried a sign which read: "Coon Season Open." "Coon" is a white term for a black person. Because there were not enough cars to accomodate all of the marchers, it was decided that they would walk back to Newton, the black section. As they marched they sang "We Shall Not Be Moved". From my car I saw them heckled and harrassed by several cars of white men in full view of the Monroe police. One car attempted to force mine off the road, with men yelling, "Hey, New York nigger, what are you doing down here." They desisted when I gave them reason to beleive I was armed. The Freedom Riders and black youth of Monroe were not daunted by the harrassment, but continued singing. As the column crossed into Newton fighting erupted and at least a dozen white men were beaten and driven from the area. The Freedom Riders and their colored supporters continued their singing until they arrived at the house which had been rented for them and christened "Freedom House"

The next day, Sunday, against Williams' advice, the Freedom Riders decided to picket the court house again. There was even some talk of "sitting-in" at the local white churches. As the day wore on local Negroes passing through town reported to us that there were more country whites in town than they had ever seen before, and that their mood indicated certain trouble. Bruised and beaten Freedom Marchers, both black and white, and black who had nothing to do with the picketing, stumbled back into Newton to relate how they had been set upon by mobs of angry whites, nearly always in full view of policemen. At about 4 o'clock I received a call in Williams' house from James Ferman, one of the picket captains, requesting us to send four cars at 5 o'clock to remove the pickets. He too confirmed the ugly mood of the whites and complained about lack of police protection. (that was the last time I spoke with him. An hour later he was in the hospital being stiched for a wound in his head.) At 4:30 the Negro taxi company reported that the Monroe police had blocked every entrance into the town and that they could not, as they had been doing all week, go to pick - up picketers. Just then several cars (including my own, and driven by a man I did not know) sped up in front of the Williams' house and men piled out reporting that the whites in the town seemed to have gone mad. A Negro woman with a baby had been beaten to the ground. Several shots had been fired. The town was in the grip of a full scale riot. All of the Freedom riders had been arrested. ( Some of these stories I later learned were exaggerated.) Several of us jumped into cars and sped toward the center of Monroe with the hope of rescuing as many of our people as possible.

But as we drew within seeing distance of the jailhouse we were blocked by a traffic jam. Two cars of Monroe colored men raced toward us from the town. They yelled at us that the police were disarming all the Negroes they encountered on the road. As we turned our car around I saw a line of white men, some in police uniforms, firing down-hill into an area where freight cars were standing. I saw black men scrambling between the cars to avoid the bullets. We waited for them and pulled them into the car before we sped back into the colored district.

From this moment on the events multiplied with lightning-like rapidity. Crowds of Afro-Americans, most of them not active followers of Williams, began to crowd into the area. They grew angrier and angrier as they heard what had happened in town. Nearly all the men who had escaped from town had been stoned or beaten. They had exchanged fire with the whites and a policeman was reported to have been shot. No one was quite sure whether a black or white person had shot him.

(It should be emphasized that during the entire afternoon Williams had not left his home. By agreement with the Freedom Riders he had not participated in their picketing because of differing views on the effectiveness of Passive Resistance. Nor were they in any way under his direction. The extent of his involvement was that on the previous Monday he had asked the people of Newtown to support the Freedom Riders with contributions of money, food and living accommodations, and the community, especially the rural people, had responded generously.)

Rural Negroes began to pour into the area begging for guns with which to defend themselves. Soon the crowd had grown to more than 150 persons. Most of us were especially concerned for Woodrow Wilson and Javan Leeds who had been arrested. Both were known as militant black men and the Negroes had reason to believe they would be killed if they were left in jail overnight.

At this point a highway patrolman drove into Boyte Street and stopped before Williams' house. He advised Williams to surrender his arms. Williams replied that he had broken no law and that he had no intention of committing suicide by disarming. He pointed out that he had every right to defend his home, and that was what he intended to do.

\* \* \*

By now the black crowd was in a snarling mood. The most timid of them could no longer doubt that the law had broken down. They had no idea what had happened to the blacks and the whites who were still trapped in town. Occasionally shots could be heard in the distance. The crowd began to shout to Williams to hold the highway patrolman until the people in town were released. Others wanted to kill the officer on the spot. With a show of anger, Williams dissuaded the crowd and urged the patrolman to leave, which he did. Williams returned to his house to call Chief Mauney at the Station.

A few seconds later a car carrying a middle-aged white couple turned into the block. From a distance of about 150 feet I saw the crowd surge in on the car and order the man out. The noise must have attracted Williams, for he emerged from his house with a puzzled expression on his face. The man had already been brought into the front yard. "Kill him! Kill him!" the crowd shouted. Williams argued loudly that the couple should be set free, that the blame for anything that happened that day would certainly be placed on him. A woman I did not know shouted, "If you turn them loose, we'll kill both you and them."

The white woman was brought forward and Williams explained to them what had happened in town shortly before. The white man seemed to be a well-to-do businessman of the area. Williams asked the man if he could help, but the man said he wasn't sure they knew him in town. The woman said, "Let me call up there, Mr. Williams." The crowd continued to chant, "Kill them! Kill them!" (The reader will wonder what had possessed the couple to turn into Boyte Street in the first place. For weeks whites in Monroe had been accustomed to turn into the block hoping to get a look at the curious black man they had heard so much about.) For their own safety, Williams explained, it would be better if they came into his house.

Just as the couple started into the house a small private airplane swooped low over the area, and several of the armed men tried to drive it off with rifle fire. The woman was visibly frightened. Immediately afterwards I left the area and did not see either Williams or the others again. An hour or so later I heard heavy shooting from the section where Williams lived. A few minutes later I received a telephone call from Williams telling me his area was surrounded by state troopers and advising me to leave Monroe so that someone would be free to write the story. I took his advice and left immediately.

In their efforts to establish an airtight case around Williams and the most militant youths of Monroe, the officials have succeeded, with the cooperation of the press, in convincing unwary readers that Williams and his followers were out looking for hostages, that they stopped the couple at a point some distance from his house and drove them into Newtown.

The fact is that the couple was stopped by a mob--not of Williams' followers--less than two hundred feet from Williams' house. The crowd was not following Williams' orders, and the man had been brought to Williams' yard before Williams knew the couple had been stopped. They were not forced into Williams' house, but went voluntarily after sensing the mood of the crowd, and after they were convinced that if they left the enraged Negroes would attack them. I have read that the couple was bound and gagged, but I doubt if this is true. Both the man and the woman were frightened and harmless, and neither seemed foolish enough to attempt to flee the angry crowd.

To the best of my knowledge, none of the youths now indicted for the "Kidnapping" had anything to do with stopping the car. The Freedom Rider, a young white man from New York, was standing near the car after the couple had left it. When someone yelled, "Get the car off the street," he stepped into it and drove it to the side. So far as I know that was his only involvement in the so-called crime.

In one sense, the forces of white supremacy have won a major battle. The man they hated and feared most has been branded a fugitive from "justice". His closest supporters are either in jail or at large, fleeing whatever indictments the Union County grand jury, all white, can think of to rid the town of militant black leaders. The personal tragedy is that at least three youths will almost certainly be sentenced to long prison terms, guilty of no crime but idealism, the belief that they could make this country a better place in which to live.

Julian Mayfield.

The following release is issued by an ad hoc committee of Vancouver residents who are interested in learning the truth about Cuba. For details phone Mr. Orville Braaten, Mutual 3-8284.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 1961

Robert Williams, a founding member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, President of the NAACP in Union County, North Carolina and a leader in the Southern lunch-counter integration movement, is coming to Vancouver to speak at the Hastings Auditorium on Wednesday, March 22.

On his cross-country speaking tour Williams has been drawing capacity crowds to hear his first-hand report on conditions in Cuba. In Los Angeles a second hall had to be booked across the street to handle the overflow audience.

In regard to the U.S. State Department's ban on travel to Cuba, designed to protect the safety of American citizens, Williams said, "It is more dangerous for an American of African descent to travel through the Southern States than it is for him to travel in Cuba."

Fair Play for Cuba Committees, sponsored by leading U.S. citizens, have been established in most American metropolitan centres and are now spreading to Canada. The newly formed committee in Toronto includes among its sponsors Professors K. McNaught and L. Dewart of the University of Toronto, distinguished author Farley Mowat, former M.P. William Irvine and Rev. J. Morgan, minister of the First Unitarian Church in Toronto.

The FPCC claims that a flood of misinformation and misrepresentation is sweeping this continent and that alert citizens with a sense of justice must make an effort to learn the truth about the Cuban revolution.

The following release is issued by an ad hoc committee of Vancouver citizens who are interested in learning the truth about Cuba. For details phone Mr. Orville Braaten, Mutual 3-8284.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 1961

On March 22 UBC students will have an opportunity to hear a preview report on conditions in Cuba when Robert Williams--a stocky, bearded young Negro who was a founding member of the U.S. Fair Play for Cuba Committee--addresses students at 12:30 in the Buchanan Building, under the sponsorship of the university's Fair Play for Cuba Club.

At eight o'clock the same night, Williams will speak at a public meeting in the Hastings Auditorium. The program will be rounded out by a well-known local folksinging group, The Folkmasters. A variety of printed reports on Cuba will be available at the meeting, including C. Wright Mills' "Listen, Yankee", Castro's speech to the United Nations, and reprints of articles which originally appeared in Saturday Night, the New Republic, the Nation and other national publications.

Williams, who is presently out on \$750 bail as the result of a sit-in demonstration in Monroe, North Carolina, told Columbia University students at a recent meeting, "I don't know what kind of 'ism' they have in the Cuba of today, but whatever it is, we could use a little of it in the United States." He stated that Afro-Americans were no longer willing to submit to the "eventualist" policies of the white supremacists as they have begun to realize that the principles of Cuban democracy could just as easily apply in "the land of the free".

In the course of a national tour (next stop--Denver, Colorado), Williams has made a number of hard-hitting attacks on U.S. policies in regard to Cuba, including the State Department's travel ban.

The U.S. ban does not affect Canadians and Vernel Olson, chairman of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee of Canada, recently announced in Toronto that the Committee is planning a one to two-week tour at Easter, costing \$250 to \$300 for air fare from New York, meals, entertainment, reservations at a luxury hotel in Havana and tours across Cuba.

The Canadian organization maintains fraternal ties with the U.S. committee. In the U.S., FPCC chapters are functioning in 12 major cities, with student councils on more than 40 university and college campuses. The Canadian committee now has chapters in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, with another chapter being formed in Winnipeg. The ad hoc committee which arranged Williams' visit to Vancouver hopes to see a further chapter set up locally.

The following release is issued by an ad hoc committee of Vancouver residents who are interested in learning the truth about Cuba. For details phone Mr. Orville Braaten, MUtual 3-8234 or Mrs. Vera MacKenzie, MUtual 4-6231.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 20, 1961

Robert Williams came back to Vancouver on Sunday night. On his previous visits he was just a soldier, on leave from the Army camp at Fort Lewis, Washington. Now the quiet, soft-spoken Negro is a national hero to some groups and a villain to others because of his fight for equal rights and his outspoken comments on the situation in Cuba.

As President of the Union County NAACP in North Carolina, Williams has played a leading role in the sit-in movement. Recently he was arrested for his integration activities--the official charge was "trespass"--and is now out on \$750 bail.

On Wednesday at noon he will be speaking at U.B.C. and in the evening at the Hastings Auditorium--the last two speeches in a tour, sponsored by the U.S. Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which has carried him from Columbia University to the Pacific. Then he will be flying back to North Carolina to be available for trial.

Williams' everyday activities in his hometown of Munroe, N.C. include the publication of a newsletter which reports happenings in the South not publicized by the commercial press. He also takes an active part in an organization known as CARE (no relation to the international relief organization) which supplies food and clothing to needy Negro families.

Now prevented from making further trips to Cuba by the U.S. State Department's travel ban, Williams (whose lack of political affiliation is acknowledged even by his detractors) makes no secret of his approval of the Castro regime. "I don't know what kind of an 'ism' they've got down there," says Williams, "but whatever it is, we could use a little of it in the United States.

# "I am not guilty"—Robert F Williams

Fugitive Negro civil rights leader Robert F. Williams has released his version of events in Monroe, N.C. which lead up to the FBI launching a continent-wide search for him for unlawful flight to avoid persecution for kidnapping. The FBI "wanted" circular, picked up by the RCMP apparently in the belief that Williams has fled to Canada, so describes Williams as to suggest that police might shoot him on sight. Far from being a criminal Williams is the president of the Union County, N.C. branch of the NAACP and a nation-wide known militant in the struggle for equal rights for his people. Knowing that racists have made several attempts on his life before the events of August 27 the Wilmington Journal, spokesman for the Monroe coloured community, asks; "Is Williams dead? and closes "If anyone knows where Williams is, he's keeping his mouth shut. But there are people who give odds that he's dead." Williams' declaration of his innocence was received from a place unknown to which he and his wife and children have fled.

On Saturday, August 26, 1961, violence was unleashed on a group of non-violent Freedom Riders in Monroe, N.C. These Freedom Riders had been invited to this racist community to aid in the Negro struggle for human rights and liberation. They, along with other Negroes were attacked because they had established a peaceful picket line around the Union County Courthouse and Mayor Fred W. Wilson's office. The police refused to make any arrests of the people who attacked Negroes and Freedom Riders.

As president of the Union County branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, I had repeatedly appealed to the Federal and State Governments to accord Negroes and White Freedom Riders equal protection under the law. These appeals were in vain. On Saturday night August 26, 1961, I talked to one Hugh P. Cannon an aide of the Governor of North Carolina (by telephone). I appealed for protection under law. The Governor's aide said that he didn't give a damn who was being beaten, that I was getting just what I deserved. He said that I had asked for violence and now I was getting it. The U.S. Justice Department also refused to intervene.

On Sunday August 27, 1961, the Monroe Non-Violent Action Committee, consisting of Freedom Riders and local Negro youth staged a picket line around the Union County courthouse protesting the absence of police protection for Negroes and all forms of racial injustice. A mob of almost 5,000 racists gathered at the square and started attacking the non-violent pickets unmercifully. The local police joined in the attack on the peaceful pickets. Police held fourteen and fifteen-year old pickets while the mob beat them Negroes from other communities tried to rescue the pickets but the police attacked them, disarmed them and armed the white thugs.

While all this was going on I was at home where I had remained throughout the picketing. Car-loads of white Ku Klux Klansmen invaded our community and started attacking Negroes. A group of Negroes gathered on the street where I lived to form collective guards to fight the KKK. They started returning the fire against the Klan.

A car was stopped and the driver, a white man, and woman were captured, disarmed and placed under citizen's arrest by a group of Negroes. I was not part of this group. However, the group said this was done to prevent killing the couple who had been recognized as part of the Klan group that had attacked them in town on Saturday. The pair of whites were brought up the block to my yard. I asked the colored group to let them go and they did. I told the whites they could go, however, they would have to leave through the angry crowd. The woman said she did not want to go through the crowd. I turned to go into the house and she followed. I was called

out into the back to set up a rear defense of the house. I was informed by others, escaping from the riot scene, that Negroes who needed medical attention were being locked in jail by police. I called the police station and asked for possible bond for the injured -- it was denied. I could here a lot of gunfire in front of my house.

I received a telephone call from a voice I identified as that of Chief of police. He said that I had caused a lot of race trouble and that state troopers were coming and that in 30 minutes I would be hanging on the court-house square. I saw police cars blocking off the block in which we lived

I remembered that I had filed charges against the Chief of Police with the Federal government because he had refused to protect Negroes. He also had threatened to kill me. I told my wife that we had to leave with the children right away and that we didn't have time to get any clothing or anything. The white couple had disappeared long before this time.

We slipped through an alley and past police cars to a highway. I wanted to leave so that I would be able to tell the world of the brutal racists oppression in Monroe, N.C. Some Negroes who passed the highway drove us to Greensboro, N.C., and from there we caught a bus to New York. We arrived August 28, 1961. We tried to telephone a number in Monroe to see if anyone was at our house. The operator informed us that all circuits to Monroe were busy. We learned later in the evening that warrents had been issued for my arrest.

This is indeed strange because four attempts had been made on my life and local, State and Federal officials refused to issue warrents. I had saved the lives of people who were now accusing me of kidnaping.

I am not guilty. My only crime is that I am a Negro who has loudly and militantly protested America's ruthless oppression of Negroes. The U.S. Government seeks my arrest at the request of Union County Klansmen because my newsletter, The Crusader, was in opposition to Kennedy's censorship plan.

In conjunction with the KKK, the U.S. Government is seeking to lynch me for political reasons. The U.S. Government's interest is based solely upon the fact that I refused to be an Uncle Tom apologist for the State Department and because I have openly supported Revolutionary Cuba.

The U.S. Government knows that I am innocent of any crime. It seeks to take over where the Klu Klux Klan failed. It intends to lynch me to silence my international newsletter which represents unbridled opposition to imperialism and racism.

Toronto  
Feb. 19, 1962

To the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy

Sir;

Today three youths will appear before a court in Monroe, North Carolina on an indictment of kidnapping arising out of an incident of racist terror that burst out in that city last August 26th. They face possible life imprisonment.

The circumstances leading up to the indictment and still prevailing today in Monroe preclude in the mind of any intelligent person any idea that they will receive justice.

The main defendant, Robert F. Williams, president of the Union County branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was forced to flee for his life and find asylum in Cuba, after the chief of police of Monroe phoned him and told him that "in thirty minutes you (Williams) will be hanging from the court house square." An indictment has also been brought against Mae Mallory, a New York City supporter of William's newsletter The Crusader, who was visiting him in Monroe and who faces extradition from the state of Ohio whence she has fled.

The defendants now before the courts are John Lowry, 20, white Freedom Rider of New York, Richard Crowder, 19, Negro of Monroe, N.C., president of the Monroe Non Violent Action Committee and Harold Reape, 17, Negro, also of Monroe and active in the Monroe NVAC.

Lowry's "crime" is that he moved the car of a white couple who had entered the Negro neighborhood at the moment a Klu Klux Klan invasion was expected. Mrs Mallory is alleged to have tied the hands of the white couple who were released unharmed and whose statements, even according to the prejudiced accounts of the North Carolina press of the terror fomented by KKK elements and condoned by local authorities, clear the defendants of the charge.

We appeal to you Mr President, and to our fellow Americans south of the border, to see that the North Carolina authorities are stopped from adding another crime to the long list of crimes that have already been committed against Negro citizens of the United States. We urge that the Attorney-General's office display the same zeal and energy that it demonstrated in attempting to apprehend Robert Williams to guarantee a fair trial to the accused. We urge, Mr President, that you utilize the authority invested in your high office to see that justice is done to these youth whose only "crime" is that they seek the enforcement of the laws of the United States--that they seek desegregation and equality.

sincerely

N  
Canadians in support of  
The Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants

res, y otros factores igualmente negativos, en cuyas manos estaba el poder político, hizo que en sesenta años de República, nuestro pueblo estuviera impedido hasta de aprender a leer y escribir. Luego se refirió a que las expresiones de cultura quedaron como privilegio para las capas más acomodadas. Dijo que para las familias de los trabajadores no había más que la radio y la televisión y en ellas sólo se ofrecían programas comerciales mal orientados y no tendían en ningún caso a elevar el nivel cultural del pueblo. No les interesaba que el pueblo se cultivara. A través de esos programas el imperialismo iba inoculando sus puntos de vista. Todo estaba tarado por esa influencia.

"No podemos pensar en modo alguno—expresó García Buchaca—que la influencia ejercida durante tantos años pueda extinguirse en un día. Por eso nuestra labor es difícil y requiere gran dedicación por los compañeros que han entendido la importancia de esta tarea para la Revolución Cubana".

Señaló que para 1962 entraremos con una planificación total de las actividades culturales para el próximo cuatrienio. El objetivo es trasladar a nuestro pueblo, en el menor tiempo posible, la mayor cultura. Anunció que aunque ya contamos con los teatros más importantes de La Habana, "dentro de poco todos los teatros del país estarán en manos del Gobierno Revolucionario, e igualmente sucederá con los cines en la capital e interior de la República, los que serán comprados o se subsidiará a sus propietarios". Es necesario contar con los medios para llevar adelante una cultura elaborada.

La característica de una nación fuerte, es tener cultura propia. Al referirse a los Círculos Culturales, dijo que son de una gran importancia política. Ni una sola noche, ni un solo día deben permanecer cerrados. Señaló que hay que dar cultura y entretenimiento; no se puede dar cultura a secas. Si la convertimos en una tarea más del pueblo, entonces no hay cultura. El teatro es un medio de educación de un alcance increíble.

Le dio una importancia extraordinaria al Movimiento de Aficionados y manifestó que en el campo de la cultura hay dos aspectos que atender: el profesional y el Movimiento de Aficionados. En su desarrollo juegan un gran papel los consejos municipales y llegará el momento en que toda fábrica tenga un grupo de aficionados. La mejor manera de amar el arte, es haciendo arte.

## EL ASILO DE ROBERT F. WILLIAMS

Puertas abiertas a un perseguido del imperialismo

**“**QUIERO decir primero gracias al pueblo de Cuba y al Gobierno Revolucionario por haberme dado asilo y por brindar a la gente que vive en un país que no está civilizado todavía; gente que tiene que huir de los bárbaros que dicen que ellos están en el mundo para enseñar a la gente a vivir democráticamente", fueron las primeras frases del líder de los afroamericanos, Robert F. Williams, en su conferencia de prensa ofrecida en los salones de "Prensa Latina".

Williams había podido escapar de las garras criminales de los agentes del FBI, que le expresaron a un amigo de éste "que lo mandarían a su casa en una caja de pino". Aún los "sesudos" agentes yanquis estarán pensando cómo pudo lograr burlar el cerco de hierro que se le había tendido. Pero de

Williams, el líder negro norteamericano que tanto a luchado contra la discriminación de sus hermanos de raza, ha podido escapar de las garras criminales del FBI, que expresaron "que lo mandarían a su casa en una caja de pino".



Williams podía esperarse después que escuchamos sus interesantes e instructivos relatos que precedieron a su espectacular fuga.

La lucha de este defensor activo, por sus hermanos de raza, ha cubierto la mayor parte de la vida de Robert F. Williams. El ripostó a la violencia con la violencia, de ahí que hoy pueda estar con nosotros.

El caso Stegall, matrimonio blanco que dicen los agentes del FBI haber secuestrado Williams, cuando lo cierto es que les salvó la vida, es el último episodio de los sucesos acontecidos los días 26 y 27 de agosto. En esa fecha los racistas del Ku Klux Klan, con base en el Allen Cross Club—que se encuentra a ocho millas de Monroe, su pueblo natal—efectuaron una agresión armada contra su hogar. Los disparos obtuvieron respuesta de la guardia voluntaria de milicias

negras que protegía el hogar de Williams. Entre la turba racista había un miembro de la Guardia Nacional. La actitud valiente de la comunidad negra de Monroe, el 30 por ciento de una población de 12,500 habitantes, recibió la amenaza de que sería bombardeada la zona por la aviación. Apoyos de matrícula particular fueron los encargados de realizar la operación, pero resultaron rechazados por el fuego de escopetas de estimado calibre. Ante semejante situación, y rodeada la zona por carros patrulleros de la policía local, los amigos del líder negro le propusieron que huyera "pues vivo podía ser más útil". Así las cosas, Williams y su familia pudieron escapar de aquellos buitres racistas sorteando los automóviles que hacían las veces de un cordón de hierro.

Llenan de indignación los relatos de las barbaridades cometidas por las turbas racistas contra la población negra de Monroe. Ni los niños escaparon a los criminales despiadados de los miembros del Ku Klux Klan. Allí tenemos el "caso del beso", donde dos niños de 8 y 10 años fueron encarcelados, e incomunicados con los presos comunes, durante seis días y noches, acusados de besar a una niña blanca de ocho años. El juez los envió a un reformatorio hasta que cumplieran la mayoría de edad. "Nosotros —dijo Williams—dimos a conocer el caso al mundo; el peso de la opinión pública obligó a que fueran libertados". Corría el año 1958, las embajadas yanquis de Holanda, Italia, Francia e Inglaterra se transformaron en escenarios de esa justa protesta contra semejante injusticia.

¿Quién no sentiría rabia, y herida su dignidad de hombre, al presenciar cómo se patea a una mujer con ocho meses en es-